

16. A brief history of the Black Sea

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Abstract

In this article we have made a list of important moments in the history of the Black Sea, a brief presentation of the various peoples whose presence and activity in this area have determined the degree of importance and how the Black Sea was received in history, and a passage in the review of the various names that this sea has received over time.

Keywords: sea, Greek, Roman, Ottoman

Introduction.

The idea that stretches of water are a defining element of human history has been supported by many historians and applies even to the Black Sea. "The sea, through all the problems it poses to the spirit and through all the possibilities offered to the material development of peoples and civilizations, is a very suitable framework for dealing with the great currents of universal history." (Gheorghe Brătianu, Black Sea, 1969). In addition to the economic or strategic importance of the sea, some feathers have been enchanted by its beauty. This was the case of our great historian, Nicolae Iorga, who, at the beginning of the last century, traveling through his homeland, reached the shores of Pontus Euxinus: "Roads open to the right, and they are sometimes saved in blue. When you reach the end of them, you stop in gratitude before a great beauty. From their shore, eaten by the waves, which throw their drops of foam in the days of rage to the very top, you see a boundless blue like the precious stone of the sapphire. From the bottom, he sees the wind, and rows of waves glide forward, hovering with white in the way, colliding with the shore and perishing in the depths. No ship or boat can be seen. Only white birds, black birds, glide from the wings to the distant ones, above the depths that do not frighten them". (Nicolae Iorga, Views of the Country, 1906).

Content

The first inhabitants of the Black Sea coast, about whom history has left us information, were the Cimmerians (whom Greek historians called kimmerios or kimmerios), beginning in the 16th century BC, followed by the Scythians (both, Indo-European peoples). The Cimmerians called this sea "Axaina" ("dark blue").

Since the sec. VIII BC on the shores of the Black Sea, Greek settlers established a number of cities that had an important economic, political, and cultural role, exerting a beneficial influence on local tribes, including the Getae of Dobrogea, cities that were hotbeds of Hellenism to whose legacy Rome will enjoy. During the Greek colonization, the sea was first called "Pontos Axeinos" (inhospitable, dark or gloomy sea), probably due to the perception of sailors during the storm, the presence of hostile tribes living on its shores, but also the phonetic takeover of the previous name, Axaina. Gradually, with the emergence of collaborative relations between the Greeks and the natives, the name changed to "Pontos Euxeinos" ("welcoming sea"), and due to the calm of its waters.



Fig. 1 Cimmerians and Scythians from North of Black Sea



Fig.2 Nomadic warriors in the Black Sea zone.



Fig.3 The ruins of Orgamon fortress - Cap Dolosman, Babadag, Tulcea county

The Romans transcribed the name in a slightly adapted form "Pontus Euxinus", but sometimes this name was replaced by "Mare Scythicum". During its period of maximum expansion, the Romans ruled the western and southern shores of the Black Sea, organizing in this area the provinces of Moesia, Thrace, Bithynia Pontus, Cappadocia, Armenia. Dobrogea was conquered by the Romans and included in the province of Moesia in 46 AD. The cities on the Dobrogea coast of the Black Sea (Callatis, Tomis and Histria) thus came under the rule of Rome, experiencing a new period of economic and cultural flourishing.

The Roman domination in the Black Sea basin was continued by the Byzantine one (in the IV - VII centuries AD). The Byzantines called the sea both "Megali Thalassa" (Great Sea) and the "Sea of the Crow". After the conquest of Constantinople by Western crusaders in 1204, the Trapezoid Empire appeared on the southern shores of the Black Sea, with the entry of Genoese merchants, who established a trade monopoly in the Black Sea basin, benefiting from strict control of a number of 20 fortified ports and trading posts.

The Italians called the sea "Mare maggiore" (the Great Sea). Taking over the tradition of this name, in 1406, the ruler of Muntenia Mircea cel Bătrân was entitled "great voivode and lord by the mercy of God and with the gift of God (...) even to the great sea and ruler of the city of Dârstor". During the period of the Bulgarian State, they used the name "Blind Sea".

The name "Kara Deniz" (Black Sea) appears in the 15th century, with the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, which took control of almost the entire Black Sea coast, a historical process triggered by the construction of the Rumeli Hisar fortress on the European shores of the Bosphorus, in 1452, and concluded, in a first phase, in 1456, when the most important Pontic powers were submitted and paid tribute to the Gate, except for a strip in an area of present-day Georgia, turning it into a "Turkish lake."

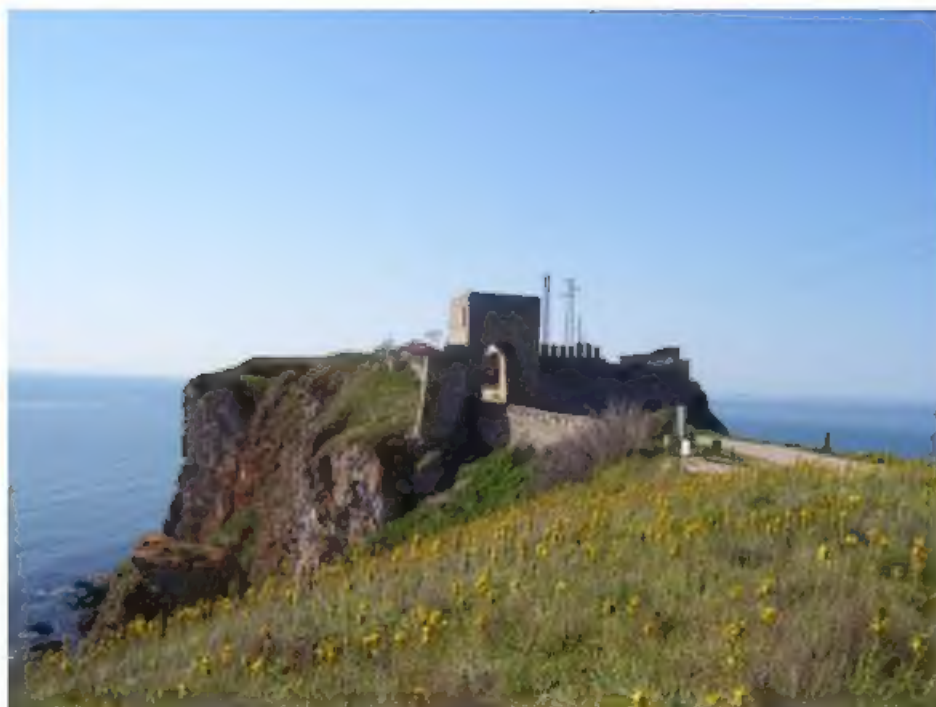


Fig.4 The ruins of medieval fortress Dobrudja Despotate - Cap Caliacra, Bulgaria

The Ottoman domination of the Black Sea was based on three elements: control over the straits and the Danube Delta, the only routes on which European ships could reach the sea; the fact that none of the states in the region had a naval force capable of threatening the Ottomans; the absence of piracy on this sea. The name, preserved to this day, of the Black Sea, comes from the association made by the peoples of antiquity and the Middle Ages, between the cardinal points and colors and meteorological phenomena. Thus, the North was called the North, being associated with the place where darkness and cold come from. That is why the Turks called the sea in the north of their empire the Black Sea. However, according to some Orientalists, "Kara" would have meant not only "black, dark" but also "big, strong, dreaded", while others consider it to be just a return to the original name, of Iranian origin, which is said to have been carried westward during Turkish migrations from Anatolia. However, in modern times, the name remains with this meaning, whether it is "Černoe More" in Russian or Ukrainian, "Cerno More" in Bulgarian, "shavi zghva" in Georgian or "Black Sea" in Romanian. Although, since 1718, Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, a botanist in the service of King Louis XIV, observed: "Whatever you know from the ancients, I must tell you that the Black Sea has nothing black except this name."

Following the Russo-Turkish wars of the 18th and 19th centuries, during which both the Ottoman and Tsarist empires placed it at the center of their strategic thinking, Turkish rule continued to shrink until, following the First Balkan War in 1912, the dominion over the shores of the Black Sea by the riparian states has acquired approximately the current configuration. However, the fate of the Black Sea was not always defined only by the relations between its great neighboring powers.

"What is happening upstream on the Danube, the Dnieper and the Don has a major impact on the health of the sea and the people living around it. Historically, parts of the sea were controlled by great imperial powers, but the shores remained in the hands of local chiefs or later under the authority of modern states." Charles King, *The Black Sea: A History*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

After the collapse of communism, the Black Sea became an important element again in many ways. After the end of the Cold War, the Black Sea and the riparian states became important points of interest in international

relations, both politically and economically and strategically, not only for themselves but also for global decision-makers. "Energy resources and security issues have focused on recognizing, defining and possibly even developing a regional identity, a geostrategic and geopolitical area with specific issues whose management concerns not only the contiguous powers of the sea, but also the whole "concert" of nations, to use a phrase launched as early as the nineteenth century. " Black Sea. History and geopolitics, Collection of studies. Vol. 1, Publishers: Lukács Antal, Gheorghe Vlad Nistor, Romanian Diplomatic Institute, Bucharest, 2006.

Conclusions

We see how, throughout history, the Black Sea has been transformed, from a simple border area, into an important region, which has facilitated contact between economic and religious communities, unions of tribes, empires, and later nations and state.

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